

Community-level Impact of a Female Empowerment Program in Uganda

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ABSTRACT

This paper is evaluation research of the community level impact of a female empowerment program in Uganda. The purpose of the research was to assess and evaluate the impact of the Girl Power Project (GPP) at the community level in communities served by schools where the GPP has been implemented. The GPP is a 60-hour program over a two-year period for 11-15-year-old girls to learn leadership and life skills. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 143 community members from seven stakeholder groups across 17 communities. Groups were Just Like My Child Foundation staff, Community Legal Volunteers, Girl Power Advocates, teachers, parents, untrained others, and partners. The stakeholders observed increased (a) confidence in their communities, (b) communication between parents and children in their communities, (c) school attendance, (d) gender equality, and (e) overall capacity in communities to respond to violence against girls. The researchers made seven recommendations for continuing and expanding this effort in Uganda and for serving as a hub for enabling others to adapt or adopt their effort in other parts of the world.

Keywords: female empowerment, violence, Uganda, Just Like My Child Foundation, communities

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Statement of the Problem

In the East African country of Uganda, adolescent girls are vulnerable to violence and lack opportunities for education. This impinges on their personal development and long-term capacity of their country to prosper in a global society and economy.

The United States Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls reports that around the world, 62 million girls are not receiving education and 250 million adolescent girls live in poverty. These girls face reduced economic opportunities; high rates of illiteracy; sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS; early and forced marriages; early and unintended pregnancies; trafficking; and other forms of discrimination, violence, and abuse. These disadvantages both perpetuate and ensure cycles of poverty, which exponentially increase as generations of girls have families of their own (United States Department of State, 2009).

When a girl becomes an adolescent, her vulnerability to gender-based violence, which includes physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and other forms of abuse, increases. In Central Uganda, there are an estimated one million adolescent girls ages 10-19 years, 90% of whom experience vulnerabilities at multiple levels, (i.e., individual, household, and community) as a result of cultural and societal norms (Amin et al., 2013).

There is a potential for the promotion of girls' education interventions to bring about social change, but a holistic approach that considers multiple perspectives and power dynamics is essential (Clarke, 2005). According to Girl Effect (Nike Foundation and Novo Foundation, 2019), a variety of forces, structures, and systems influence the opportunities available to girls. These include cultural beliefs and practices, legal environments, and government systems. To make the world safer and better for girls, social norms must be changed. Social norms are a

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community's shared set of expectations and informal rules about how people should behave, which impact the opportunities available to girls. Expanding social norms about adolescent girls can break down some of the systemic barriers to girls' ability to thrive. Any effort to change social norms for girls must secure buy-in from girls' communities — specifically their gatekeepers and community stakeholders (parents, husbands, in-laws, community leaders, and others who may exert control over girls' time and activities). Working with gatekeepers and stakeholders requires understanding their motivations and concerns and demonstrating the positive outcomes and associated value of girls' participation in a program (Nike Foundation and Novo Foundation, 2019).

Few reports that focus on the expansion of girls' education pay attention to the impact of a program at the community level, exploring the attitudes of stakeholders, most importantly, mothers, fathers, teachers, officials, and project personnel (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2006).

Background to the Problem

While Uganda is still regarded by many as the Pearl of Africa, coined by Winston Churchill in 1908 for the country's beauty, people and resources, it has also been plagued with a dark history of civil war and political instability (Arnold, 2016). This history of violence and societal trauma has resulted in a lack of access to jobs and education, leaving adolescent girls especially vulnerable.

An estimated 40%-50% of all Ugandan women marry before age 18 (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and UNICEF Uganda [MGLSD and UNICEF], 2015) and an estimated 15% marry by age 15 (Amin et al., 2013). Girls in rural areas, such as the communities found in Central Uganda, are married earlier and on average have three more children than their urban counterparts (MGLSD and UNICEF, 2015). Nationally, the mean number of years that

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girls attend school is only 4.8 (Human Development Index [HDI], 2019), and in Central Uganda nearly 50% of girls will drop out or be pulled out of school by parents or guardians by age 15 (Amin et al., 2013). Half of Ugandan women over the age of 15 have experienced physical violence and 22% of Ugandan women have experienced sexual violence. One in ten Ugandan women ages 15-49 who have ever been pregnant experienced violence during pregnancy. Over 50% of married women have experienced spousal violence (Uganda Bureau of Statistics UBOS & ICF, 2018).

Many national and international organizations are working to address these problems. Among them is the Just Like My Child Foundation (JLMC), an international non-profit organization that is focusing on empowering vulnerable adolescent girls by enabling them to create healthy, self-sustaining families who prosper without further aid (Just Like My Child Foundation, 2020). JLMC's flagship program is the Girl Power Project (GPP) that provides over 60 hours of leadership and life skills training to adolescent girls over a two-year period in an effort to keep them in school, and avoid child marriage, early pregnancy, and disease. In 2017, JLMC completed a study that adopted a quasi-experimental design to evaluate the impact of the GPP on a treatment and control group of adolescent girls in Central Uganda over a two-year period (McFarland, 2018). In 2018, JLMC contracted researchers from Texas A&M University to expand their understanding of the GPP impact beyond the primary target group of adolescent girls, boys, and adults directly trained. The researchers examined the ripple effect of the intervention within 17 communities that received the GPP programming. Seven community-level stakeholder groups were interviewed in order to gain a wider perspective and deeper insight into the community-level impact of the GPP. Because the aim of the GPP is to equip girls to thrive, JLMC needed to fill the gap in their understanding of community motivations, concerns, and

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buy-in to further enrich the program for optimal social change, particularly reduced or elimination of violence against vulnerable adolescent girls and improved opportunities for education.

Literature Review

JLMC had previously evaluated the effect of the GPP on participating girls, GPP Ugandan staff, Community Legal Volunteers (CLVs), Girl Power Advocates (GPAs), parents, and teachers (McFarland, 2018). Based on that information, JLMC sought to further understand how the GPP impacted the communities where the intervention was implemented. Specifically, they wanted to know if there are changes in knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors among the residents in the communities where GPP training was conducted. JLMC became interested in learning if the stakeholders in the communities are now changing or shifting their perception and value of girls as a result of their participation or awareness of the GPP.

Too often, research that addresses girls' education explores narrow emphases. For example, a female stipend program in Bangladesh (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2006) was widely praised for a decade after multiple reports offered quantitative analysis of success. However, the research focused only on access and retention as measures of success, while offering little to no insight into the ways in which lives and attitudes of stakeholders were being affected. This lack of examination can result in significant gaps in understanding that create a false sense that a problem has been solved and opportunities for improvement and optimization of programming are lost (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2006).

Another example is the impact evaluation that was carried out on Girl Empower in Liberia. The program aimed to equip adolescent girls with the skills and experiences necessary to make healthy, strategic life choices. The evaluation found that the program was in demand,

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feasible, and acceptable to both girls and their caregivers. The study highlighted that the Girl Empower program was well-attended and reduced the rates of child marriage and risky sexual behaviors for girls ages 13-14 up to a year after they received the intervention. However, the evaluation found that changes were limited to the girls themselves. It did not appear to increase the protective factors surrounding them in family and home life, such as increased attention to their wellbeing by their caregivers. The attitudes of the caregivers with respect to gender norms and their aspirations for the girls was not affected (Hallman et al., 2018).

The Health Evidence Network notes that empowerment is a complex strategy that sits within complex environments. Effective empowerment strategies may depend as much on the agency and leadership of the people involved as on the overall context in which they take place and the empowerment approaches that enable community members to focus on changing the local or external conditions that cause ill health (Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). Similarly, Keleher and Franklin (2008), purported that focusing on women and girls is a sound investment, but outcomes are reliant on integrated approaches and the protective umbrella of government actions.

Studies that evaluate the effectiveness of interventions that challenge norms supportive of violence are rare (World Health Organization, 2009). A systematic review synthesized evidence on the impact of interventions to prevent violence against adolescent girls and young women aged 10-24 years in low- and middle-income countries. The review found that preventing violence against girls and young women is understudied in poor countries: only four studies focused on adolescents and none focused on interventions to prevent sexual violence. In these studies, a review found that interventions involving community engagement, skill-building to

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enhance agency, and social-network expansion show promise in reducing violence against women and girls (Yount et al., 2017).

This evaluation of the community level impact of the GPP empowerment program in Uganda will help fill a critical gap in research by going beyond understanding impact through individual level measures of success in girl participants not only but also by examining the multiple level ripple effect of the intervention on the broader community (Yount et al, 2017). This evaluation research will allow JLMC to gain deeper insight into how the GPP is meeting objectives of engaging stakeholders to protect and support the empowerment of girls and what might be required in the next phase for optimal programmatic outcomes. The evaluation research also aims to contribute to the body of research that is currently lacking in these types of interventions. This will heighten the sensitivity of other researchers and practitioners to the importance of programs to impact the broader environment in which efforts are undertaken for systemic longer-term change in social norms.

Theoretical Framework

This evaluation research is based on the principles of constructivist grounded theory (GCT) and is intended to link with a future initiative that will be based on theory of change. The purpose of evaluation research is to illuminate the impact of a social intervention in order to have a recognizable effect in the context in which it is conducted. Often it is used for program evaluation that uses contemporary research methods for evaluation purposes (Sheperis et al., 2017).

This research is founded on GCT which has been described as both a method and a theory and provides guidelines for identifying categories and strategies for constant comparison, while generating a framework to understand the environment that is being studied (Patton, 2002;

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Sheperis et al., 2017). Constructivist grounded theory is inductive, comparative, interactive, iterative and abductive. Abductive logic is the discovery of surprising findings that previously have gone unchecked and which point to subsequent pragmatic action. Of note, GCT places researchers in the social and cultural context of the research, acknowledges the researchers' social position and subjectivity, and encourages reflectivity (Sheperis et al., 2017). In sum, GCT is inductive, comparative, open-ended, and emphasizes action evaluation research is often considered as applied or action research, as opposed to basic or theoretical research. The approach is rigorous and systematic, involves collecting data about programs and services and should produce knowledge for making decisions that lead to practical applications (Patton, 2002; Sheperis et al., 2017). Fundamental to this method and theory is the role and perceptions of stakeholders who benefit from such efforts. Also imbedded in GCT is the concept of lasting change.

It is important to point out that, in the context of future practical applications to respond to prevailing societal issues in Africa, this evaluation research could be a prelude to the use of theory of change used by not-for-profit and government organizations to promote social change, (i.e., to plan, participate, and evaluate such efforts). It is useful to understand theories of change to assess impact in hard-to-measure areas such as governance, capacity building, and institutional development (Brown, 2016). A next step could be a strengthened guide to contribute to JLMC's long-term planning, solid monitoring and evaluation framework, scaling up of prevailing efforts, and envisioning and adding new components and initiatives.

In summary, evaluation research is a purpose, not a method, to evaluate the impact of an intervention. While it is a form of applied research, it has the added intent of leading to applicability and impact in a real-world context.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this evaluation research was to assess and evaluate the impact of the GPP training program at the community level where the GPP was implemented. Since 2009, the GPP has been implemented in 72 communities in central Uganda and has reached over 6,000 adolescent girls. In recent years the GPP has been developing a similar program of adolescent boys. The GPP is implemented through schools with a written covenant approved by the schools and local community leaders. Previous evaluations had evaluated the effect of the GPP on participating girls, GPP staff, parents, and teachers. This evaluation research sought to explore the effect the GPP is having on community norms and policies as perceived by a wider set of stakeholders. Two questions guided this inquiry.

- 1- How has the GPP impacted the knowledge and behaviors of the different stakeholders including JLMC staff, Community Legal Volunteers (CLVs), Girl Power Advocates (GPAs), teachers, parents, untrained others (UTOs), and partners?
- 2- How has the GPP impacted community norms and policies where it was implemented?

Method

A mixed-method research approach was used in this study to answer the guiding questions. The approach included the review of archived and secondary data, developing a set of open-ended questions, interviewing seven stakeholder groups, reflecting on responses, analyzing the responses, and writing and disseminating an extensive report. Four graduate students were guided in the research by two faculty members and leaders of JLMC based in the U.S. and in Uganda. Semi-structured interviews permitted gaining an in-depth understanding of the context and allowed stakeholder interviewees to share their perspectives and stories associated with the open-ended questions (Erlandson et al., 1993).

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Participants

The researchers collected data from 143 interviewees which was bolstered by their observations and reflections over an eight-week period in the summer of 2018. This prolonged engagement at the community level in the region permitted the researchers to become familiar with the culture of the country and communities where they conducted the interviews. The researchers conducted interviews with seven stakeholder groups: the JLMC staff (19), CLVs (34), and GPAs (34), teachers (12), parents (10), UTOs (30), and partners (4). All stakeholders were native Ugandans. CLVs are adult community members who are trained by JLMC staff in human rights, Ugandan laws, and legal resources, with special emphasis on girls' and children's rights and sexual and gender-based violence. GPAs are volunteer adult community members tasked with sensitizing their community on the major topics of the GPP curriculum, including children's rights, gender roles, and gender-based violence. Teachers are defined as teachers in primary schools and are trained in the JLMC teacher-specific curriculum. Parents are defined as individuals who are parents of children in primary schools and trained in the JLMC curriculum. UTOs are community members who have not received the official GPP training from JLMC. Partners included Bishop Asili Hospital staff, police officers, and other community members who have a strong connection to JLMC but have not been officially trained in the GPP curriculum.

Instruments

To be consistent with the data collection process, the research team participated in a detailed six-month training program that started in fall of 2017 and prevailed throughout the research period. The training focused on how to conduct systematic qualitative research, including constructing survey questions, conducting semi-structured interviews, registering responses, performing content analysis, quantifying responses, and analyzing and interpreting responses.

The spring of 2018 was dedicated to reviewing previous survey instruments and results used by JLMC staff to collect information from beneficiaries of the GPP. The material found in archived data became the initial source of information used to develop open-ended questions for interviews and conversations with stakeholders. The research team then consulted with two experts in the field about the interview questions in terms of clarity, reliability, and appropriateness when interacting with community stakeholders. In addition, the research team pilot-tested the questions with two stakeholders. Finally, the researchers worked with the Ugandan JLMC staff to properly phrase the questions in an English vernacular that was specific to the region where the research would be carried out. This phrasing allowed the questions to be better understood by the interviewees being asked the questions in English and more easily translated into the local language of Luganda by the Ugandan JLMC staff, as some stakeholders interviewed did not speak English. The archived data, expert consultation, stakeholder pilot and language adaptation with the Ugandan JLMC staff, resulted in nine open-ended questions that the research team used to guide the interviews for this study. The interpreters were able to communicate the essence of the questions and the stakeholders were able to understand the questions and provide the information that was needed for the evaluation research.

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The observations and reflections of the researchers helped bolster the data collected from the interviews. The researchers took copious notes during the interviews, noting the body language and tone of the interviewee. Between interviews, the researchers observed the JLMC staff as they facilitated the GPP workshops and the students as they participated in the workshops. Often the researchers would debrief each interview with the translator, to confirm they did not miss any information. Moreover, as the researchers spent time in the community, they observed the day to day functions of the community members. Together, the researchers debriefed and processed their experiences and observations, adding further meaning and understanding to their observations.

Validity and Reliability

By using multiple data sources, the researchers were able to cross check and validate their findings (Patton, 2002). They reviewed archived reports and data provided by JLMC leaders. In addition, they familiarized themselves with the history of Uganda and the history of JLMC's work in the region.

In conducting the face-to-face interviews, the questions were asked in English and translated into the local language. The responses were translated into English. All interviews were audio recorded, and the researchers took copious notes throughout the interactions, including their field observations of delivery of the GPP that included in-school presentations and activities and community-level meetings with local government officials and trainings for adults. With the help of a translator, the researchers checked the responses to accurately understand the meaning of the respondents' viewpoints, thoughts, and experiences. The interviews were then transcribed in English by the researchers. The transcription process included listening, transcribing, and reviewing the responses. Together, the team debriefed their interactions with stakeholders and

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reviewed the transcribed responses to deduce themes and ensure the responses reflected the themes. The observed data was triangulated with the verbal responses provided in the interviews (Erlandson et al.,1993). Credibility was further ensured through the researcher's prolonged engagement in the community, peer debriefing among the researchers, and member checking during the interviews (Erlandson et al., 1993). In total, the research team netted 2,693 responses to the nine questions from the seven stakeholder groups. For each question and for each stakeholder group, the researchers reached consensus on the themes that emerged and the number and percent of the respondents that mentioned statements related to each theme. This produced a robust amount of data to be interpreted for each stakeholder group and across stakeholder groups.

Results

An analysis of the data produced themes that support impact at the community level. Following are six major evidence-based impacts deduced from the analysis.

Impact 1 is an increase in community awareness and advocacy for girls' education. This impact is first demonstrated by the responses to question 1, *"Think about your community. What was the situation for girls before GPP and now?"* Here, 50 (36%) of the respondents reported an increase in school attendance and a decrease in dropout rate as a change because of the GPP. This impact is further illuminated in question 6, *"Before the GPP training, how would you help a girl or boy when they come to you saying they are pregnant or have gotten a girl pregnant? Based on your training, how would you help him/her now?"* Here, 55 (40%) of the respondents stated that in the case of an early pregnancy, they would encourage the girl to stay in or return to school upon conclusion of the pregnancy. For example, a CLV identified how GPP has helped fathers encourage their girls to continue their education instead of getting married at a young age.

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While school attendance is beneficial for the obvious reasons of gaining an education, increased school attendance among girls also demonstrates how communities are valuing their girl children more. Therefore, the GPP impact is invaluable because communities are developing more respect and appreciation for their girls. This impact was also present in the response from a parent who claimed that because of GPP, fathers began to prioritize the education of their girls.

Impact 2 is an increase in community knowledge and agency to respond to violence against girls. This community level impact was evident by the responses to question 7, *“Before the GPP training, how would you help a girl or boy who came to you saying they experienced violence? Based on your training, how would you help him/her now?”* Here, 74 (53%) of the respondents indicated they felt the GPP had increased their capacity to respond to a situation in which a child was being violated. Furthermore, 72 (53%) of the respondents reported they would involve the legal system in the same case. For example, a CLV identified that the community now knows the laws that protect children’s rights. Because of this increase in knowledge, children are working less and playing more. The GPP has taught parents about laws limiting child labor and has helped parents become advocates for the laws in their community, enabling more children to be helped. This increased knowledge helps all children, not just girls. This is demonstrated by the immense ripple effect of the GPP and how entire communities benefit when girls are protected.

This impact was evident in a response from a JLMC staff member who stated “girls are better equipped to report violence.... the community is more likely to report cases of abuse.” In an interview, a staff member revealed how a neighbor was beating a child. When the wife tried to stop the husband, the husband stopped beating the child and started to beat the wife. The staffer raised an alarm and told the husband he was not supposed to do those violent things. The

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staffer informed the researchers that the husband in question has not hit the wife since the confrontation.

Impact 3 is an increase in community awareness and dialogue on women's equality. This impact was supported by responses to question 2, *"How has the GPP changed the way you communicate about women's empowerment in your community?"* and question 4, *"Think about gender roles. What was the situation before Girl Power Project and now?"* In responses to question 2, 58 (42%) of the respondents reported increased confidence to communicate about women's empowerment as a result of the GPP. In addition, 40 (29%) of the respondents reported that they communicate by encouraging and empowering women in the community. Furthermore, support for this aspect of impact is found in responses to question 4 where 56 (40%) of the respondents reported an increase in the community awareness of gender equality after the introduction of the GPP. A CLV reported that after sensitizing the community, the men are now beginning to take responsibilities and are more involved in their children's daily activities. Also, a GPA reported that since GPP became active in their community, women are carrying out income generating activities and helping guide their children through school. This further demonstrates how communities are valuing women more. As young women are learning about equality, and consequently teaching other men and women in their communities, a reverse generational influence is being observed, which is an interesting cultural change phenomenon. In addition, a "pass it forward" movement is happening, where young girls are inspiring adults in their community, who, in turn inspire other adults in their community. Therefore, GPP is offering immense potential for gender equality by modeling a way for sustained change in a culture that will impact current and future generations.

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This impact was evident in a response from a GPA. While conducting interviews in the field, the researchers had a dialogue with a GPA about the change in gender roles because of the GPP's presence. The GPA stated "Before girl power, my husband would get very mad at me if I did not get his permission before selling my harvest but now that he has been trained by girl power he is no longer getting angry when I make those decisions without him."

Impact 4 is the assumption of responsibility by community leaders with regards to girls' issues. This is evidenced by responses to question 5, "*How has the Girl Power Project changed the way your community leaders protect girls?*" Here, 87 (63%) of the respondents, the highest number of respondents to any question asked, reported an increase in assumption of responsibility by community leaders to protect girls. This impact was further punctuated by 35 (25%) of the respondents who reported an increase in community leaders bringing awareness to the dangers faced by girls in the community. For example, a GPA indicated that after GPP, community leaders no longer cover up cases about violence with children. This increase in assumption of responsibility has the potential to deeply affect the way communities respond to these events. Community leaders are now holding perpetrators of violence accountable. Further, community members not only understand the value of girls, but also understand how individually they can help make their communities safer. Community members have identified their individual responsibilities and sense of agency; they are moving beyond acquiring knowledge and are now taking action.

This impact of assumption of responsibility was further seen in a response from a CLV who explained that there was a grandmother in her community who was seriously abusing her grandchild. Upon hearing of this situation, a group of individuals who had been trained by the GPP went to the grandmother with the police and informed her that she was violating the child's

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rights and she would face legal repercussions if it did not stop. The abuse continued, so the group went back with the police and a case was made against the abusive women. Upon reaching out to the child's other family to find her a place to live, the CLV discovered the mother of the child but the grandmother was forcefully keeping her against the child's will. The CLV reunited the family.

Impact 5 is an increased range of gender roles within the community where males and females are assuming roles historically and culturally assigned to the other gender. Evidence of this is reflected in responses to question 4, "*Think about gender roles. What was the situation before Girl Power Project and now?*" Here, 47 (34%) of the respondents reported an increase in individuals pursuing non-traditional gendered careers because of the GPP. This aspect was also represented by 52 (37%) of the respondents who reported an increased equality in domestic responsibility and attributed this change in gender roles to the GPP. For example, a teacher reported that now parents are encouraging both boys and girls to become educated. By setting an example, parents are impacting their children even more than the GPP intended. By serving in a non-traditional gender role, parents are serving as role models for their children. By serving in a non-traditional gender role, females in the community are showing young girls that they do not have to conform to what their community expects of them, rather they can do whatever they dream. The GPP is impacting communities by teaching parents and communities the value of women and encouraging men and women to pursue non-traditional gender roles.

This impact was seen in a response from a CLV. While in the field conducting interviews, the researchers learned that a CLV's son went to visit his sister during a holiday. He had not been raised to believe that boys should weed the garden. At his sister's house many boys

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and men were weeding and the CLV's son was confused. Because of this experience, the CLV is trying to raise his kids to share in the work as he is with his wife.

Impact 6 is an increase in the capacity of community members to parent their children. This impact is clearly represented by responses to question 8, *“Think about your family. Do you stay with children? Among these children, do you have girls? How was your parenting before the GPP and how is it now? Has it changed?”* Here, 61 (44%) of the respondents, including those who were parents and those who were not parents, reported an increase in communication between the parents and their children. Moreover, 54 (39%) of the respondents reported an increase in general ability to parent better. Additionally, 32 (23%) of the respondents reported a decrease in disciplinary actions towards children. For example, a parent reported that now, they take time to explain the importance of education to their children. Understanding how the GPP impacted parents helps further understand the potential impact this project will have on entire communities. By teaching parents how to care, protect, encourage, and empower their children, they are creating an environment where everyone can learn from the example of a few.

During interviews conducted in the communities who have received the GPP, the researchers conversed with a parent who reflected on the effect of the GPP training on how she parents her children. The parent said that before the GPP training, she would leave all the decisions and concerns about the children to her husband. The parent said, *“After the parents’ meeting I was given more skills to be a good parent.”* She explained that because of the GPP, she has become more concerned with her children. She also informed us that her relationship with her children is much better after the GPP.

Discussion

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Consistent with the principles of evaluation research, this discussion is to recommend next steps that JLMC and other organizations with similar trajectories and interest may consider taking. These are based on the review of archived data, development of interview questions, field interviews with the stakeholders, extensive interactions between the researchers and JLMC Staff in Uganda, analysis of the data collected, and in-depth conversations between the researchers and the leaders of JLMC. The recommendations are presented with the hope that they may contribute to the successful, noble, and effective work of JLMC in the Luwero Triangle, other regions of Uganda, and, perhaps, other parts of Africa and beyond.

Recommendation 1. To expand an emerging Boy Power Project (BPP), which aims to help boys develop life skills and encourage the protection of girls into a multi-day training format. The researchers feel that the sensitization of boys is imperative to the success of the GPP. A common response to question nine, pertaining to the perceived need for expanded and extended training of the BPP, was that training girls is great, however, to attain even more success, the boys need additional, if not the same three-day training the girls are receiving. One respondent said, “If the girls are trained alone, then the community would not treat them right, but if the boys are also trained, the community must and will be better to them”. The researchers noted that the impact of training both genders in primary schools is already making a positive difference in the lives of these future leaders. The researchers feel that as more boys are educated through the BPP curriculum, more households in the community will be reached and further the impact of this effort at the community level.

Recommendation 2. To offer more trainings and sensitization sessions for parents.

The researchers observed all stakeholder groups and community members calling for additional training to help the at-home development of children. The parents were singled out as an

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important stakeholder group that could be engaged through a special program tailored specifically for them. Because GPP already conducts this work through its community-wide meetings and establishes a binding covenant between the community and JLMC, there is widespread approval for GPP programming. The stakeholders in these communities believe that a possible next step is to go beyond and focus this training on specifically sensitizing parents to the value of equality in domestic responsibility, the importance of healthy disciplinary actions, and other topics that pertain to the role and responsibility of parents. The researchers strongly agree with this sentiment and propose that future trainings be crafted specifically for this purpose. The researchers believe that as more parents are educated, they will develop the potential for serving as role models for their children and, by creating more role models, more children can be taught and impacted earlier in their lives.

Recommendation 3. To offer trainings for local counsel and other political leaders on the message of GPP to increase awareness and legal accountability. A striking sub-theme that emerged was the need to train community leaders, such as local government officials. Such training could be similar and additional to the trainings offered to GPAs and CLVs. Respondents from all stakeholder groups strongly indicated that the CLVs, GPAs, and other community-level supporters of the GPP would have more success in helping carry out the mission of JLMC and GPP if leaders high in the hierarchy of power within the community, chiefly the police and local government officials, received similar or near-same sensitization. Perhaps a future investment in GPP communities is to design trainings that engage the leaders of these communities.

Recommendation 4. To continue fostering partnerships with other non-profit organizations in Uganda to create a holistic approach to address issues facing girls. Like all non-profit and non-governmental organizations, JLMC depends on donations from sponsors to offer its services. In

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the long term, ideally JLMC's efforts would be totally sponsored by the schools, either through some local, regional, or national government funding or fees paid by the community or parents, or a combination of both. Because this may take time, in the meantime, the researchers encourage JLMC to link with larger organizations that are already attracting funding and can manage large donations. These partnerships could offer GPP as a complement to their programs. The strategy would be for the larger organizations to include the GPP and, perhaps, other JLMC programs as part of their solicitations for large donations. This would permit JLMC to focus on current programs and therefore not expand their programming to attract larger donations and run the risk of losing the community level impact they are now enjoying.

Recommendation 5. To focus deeper into the Luwero Triangle community as opposed expanding the GPP into other parts of the country. The research team feels that as the impact of GPP increases and continues to gain visibility and prominence, it will face not only new opportunities but also new challenges. Because of this, the researchers feel that soon JLMC will have to decide where and to what extent the GPP can be expanded. The researchers recommend spreading deep, not wide and to keep in mind the community immunity principle. Community immunity to a disease takes place when a significant portion of the population of a community is vaccinated and it provides a measure of protection for the rest of the population. If the GPP is viewed as a social vaccine, by vaccinating the majority of a community against gender-based violence, the rest of the community has a greater chance of successfully defeating gender-based violence. Currently, the GPP is taking place in approximately 42 communities in the Luwero Triangle. The researchers feel it is better to increase the number of GPP communities within this region, expanding it to include boys, and providing more training for parents and community leaders.

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This would permit saturating the districts with the ideals of women empowerment before considering expanding to other neighboring districts or parts of the country.

Recommendation 6. To consider creating a GPP Center of Excellence. Such a center would be a place where other non-governmental and governmental organizations would come to learn about how to adopt or adapt the philosophy, culture, and process of the GPP. Such a center would receive small teams of interested and passionate individuals who would be immersed in all aspects of the GPP and construct ways to apply it in their localities. Such programs would require small teams to spend at least three weeks training and constructing their own programs. Prior to coming for training the communities would have to commit to putting the GPP into practice. A fee for this training would be charged to offset actual expenses associated with the training, e.g., time of JLMC Staff, training materials, lodging, meals, and other indirect service costs. The effort would be formatively evaluated.

Recommendation 7. To incorporate agriculture, food security, and nutrition education into the GPP club sessions. Two parts comprise this recommendation. First, the researchers found that a majority of the GPAs indicated that learning about nutrition and producing, processing, and marketing food products from the local area would be beneficial for their communities. Nearly all indicated that the main reason for generating income was to invest in the education of their children (e.g., paying for school fees) continuing to secondary school, and, in some cases, help save to pursue a university education. They suggested establishing gardens at the schools as a first step. Gardens could be used for teaching, serve as demonstration sites for surrounding communities, and be used for training during the GPP club sessions. The researchers feel that this effort could be expanded to include entrepreneurship which could include processing,

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transporting, marketing, and leadership development among boys, girls, and adults, and could lead to the establishment of a more formal technical agriculture school.

Limitations in this evaluation research included the following. It was not possible to control the environment where the data was collected, especially since data were collected from multiple locations. It was difficult to anticipate the internal and external environments ahead of the community visits. There was a language barrier that had to be reconciled during the first two weeks which may have reduced the total number of respondents in the study. Having to collect data through a translator limited the potential for follow up questions during the interviews. There was time lost in analyzing and interpreting the data because of poor internet for sharing data and communication effectively and timely. The fact that the researchers were from outside Uganda and did not fully grasp the culture in the short time they were there limited somewhat having fluid and organic conversations with the stakeholders.

Delimitations in this evaluation included the following. The time in Uganda was delimited to eight weeks. During that time data collecting was delimited to 17 rural communities that were felt to be representative of all the communities served by GPP. Time in each community was delimited by accessibility and travel logistics. Translations were delimited by the JLMC Staff and other facilitators in the field.

Conclusion

The purpose of this evaluation research was to assess and evaluate the impact of the GPP training program in the communities where it has been implemented. The research is based on the principles of constructivist grounded theory, and it is intended to link with a future initiative that will be based on theory of change. The evaluation research approach was intended to inform

potential next steps that may be taken by JLMC to continue and expand the implementation of the GPP.

This research contributes to the void that exists in the literature related to the broader impacts that female empowerment programs have in developing nations such as changes in the social norms of targeted communities, the ripple effect. The research shows that, in fact, from the perspective of 143 interviewees from seven stakeholder groups from 17 communities in Uganda, the GPP is impacting the knowledge and behavior of how community members react and respond to how adolescent girls are treated. The results not only show ample evidence of this but also point out desired future directions as expressed by the stakeholders. These potential future directions bolster the capacity of the GPP to have a longer-term impact through systemic change that may pervade over time and contribute to the development of women and Uganda.

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Appendix 1

Open-ended Interview Questions

1. Think about your community. What was the situation for girls before GPP and now?
2. How has the GPP changed the way you communicate about women's empowerment in your community?
3. Because of GPP, how has your view on women's leadership changed?
4. Think about gender roles. What was the situation before Girl Power Project and now?
5. How has the Girl Power Project changed the way your community leaders protect girls?
6. Before the GPP training, how would you help a girl or boy when they come to you saying they are pregnant or have gotten a girl pregnant? Based on your training, how would you help him/her now?
7. Before the GPP training, how would you help a girl or boy who came to you saying they experienced violence? Based on your training, how would you help him/her now?
8. Think about your family. Do you stay with children? Among these children, do you have girls? How was your parenting before the GPP and how is it now? Has it changed?
9. What more would you like to see done in your community?